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ABSTRACT

Although the FCB (Foote, Cone, & Belding) grid was never intended to serve as an educational tool, it can be applied successfully in advertising classes to address the three areas that S. E. Moriarty considers to be the minimum for writing strategy. To demonstrate the superiority of the FCB grid as a pedagogical tool, a study analyzed strategies written according to three different methods: a textbook formula, the FCB quadrant, and the FCB sextant grid. The target group for the study, undergraduate university students who had selected an advertising option within the journalism major, were taught to write advertising strategies using one of the three methods. The students were then tested and their tests were scored by independent, informed adjudicators. Findings showed that half of the strategies written with the textbook formula were scored as below average or weak. Two were scored as average and good and one as excellent. All the strategies written according to the FCB quadrant method were scored as average or good, while none were scored as excellent. Seven of the strategies written according to the FCB sextant method were scored as either good or excellent and three as average. (Contains 6 figures, 5 tables of data, and 20 references.) (TB)

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DEMONSTRATING THE SUPERIORITY OF THE FCB GRID AS A TOOL FOR STUDENTS TO WRITE EFFECTIVE ADVERTISING STRATEGY

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ABSTRACT

This paper, as far as could be determined, is a first attempt to measure the effectiveness of advertising strategy. It is demonstrated by illustrating how the FCB grid (quadrant and sextant versions) can be used by students to write superior advertising strategies when compared to a textbook formula. Using three different methods to teach students how to write advertising strategy, they were analyzed and evaluated to demonstrate that when the FCB grid is used to write advertising strategies, it results in superior advertising strategies.

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INTRODUCTION

Advertising educators may have different methods of teaching strategy, but, based on discussions the author has had with colleagues at various universities, they all seem to face similar frustrations: the majority of advertising students experience problems when it comes to grasping, and writing effective advertising strategy. Although authors of advertising textbooks propose various formats, they are unanimous in proposing a document detailing the components for effective strategy.

Jewler (1992) suggests that strategy should be simple, specific, durable and advertisable, and proposes the following ingredients: advertising objective, description of the target audience, key selling idea and key benefits. Albright (1992) claims that strategy is a plan for action and recommends a creative work plan consisting of the following components: client, key fact, consumer problem to overcome, advertising goal, principal competition, target market, consumer promise, reason why, and mandatories. In explaining DDB Needham's R.O.I. (Relevance, Originality and Impact) strategy, Wells (1989) says the R.O.I. secret lies in answering five questions:

- What is the purpose of the advertising?
- To whom will the advertising be addressed?
- What competitive benefit will be promised and how will it be supported?
- What personality will distinguish the brand?
- When, where and under what circumstances will the target be most receptive to the message and what media will deliver that message at the lowest possible cost? [1]

From the foregoing it should be clear that there is no one correct way to write

advertising strategy and that advertising practitioners and educators have different methods of writing and teaching strategy. Moriarty (1991) suggests that the minimum areas which a strategy should address are:

- To whom are we talking?
- What do we want to tell them?
- How are we going to tell them?

Although the FCB grid was never intended to serve as an educational tool, the author has applied it successfully in his advertising classes to address the three areas which Moriarty (1991) considers to be the minimum for writing strategy. Richard Vaughn, creator of the FCB grid, introduced this model in 1979 "in response to a need for strategic discipline and creative stimulation during advertising planning."[2] The grid builds on the traditional advertising/marketing theories (1950s), consumer behavior models (1960s), and consumer involvement and brain specialization theories (1970s & 1980s).

Figure 1: The FCB grid

HIGH INVOLVEMENT / LOW INVOLVEMENT	RATIONAL/THINK	EMOTIONAL/FEEL
	1. INFORMATIVE (Thinker) Economic Learn-feel-do Car-house-furnishings	2. AFFECTIVE (Feeler) Psychological Feel-learn-do Jewelry-cosmetics-fashion apparel-motorcycles
	3. HABIT FORMATION (Doer) Responsive Do-learn-feel Household items	4. SELF-SATISFACTION (Reactor) Social Do-feel-learn Cigarettes-liquor-candy

As can be seen from Figure 1, the FCB grid centers on consumers in the purchasing and decision-making process and this is encompassed in an outline where each area has its own specific characteristics pertaining to:

- assessing consumer involvement in the decision-making process
- determining if purchases are made mainly for rational/emotional reasons
- suggesting the most suitable strategy for a specific area
- approximating one of the traditional advertising/marketing theories
- suggesting the appropriate hierarchy-of-effects model
- depicting products positioned in each area

With the introduction of *The Copy Workshop Workbook* (1988), Bendinger proposed a formula for writing advertising strategy which consists of three components: objective statement, support statement and a choice between a tone or brand character statement (the author favors a brand character statement, while Bendinger leans toward a tone statement, which deals with the selling attitudes of the advertising).

The **objective statement** combines the advertising objective with a brief description of the target market and brand name. The proposed formula that Bendinger suggests, is: Advertising will (verb)(target market) that (product/brand) is/will/provides (statement of objective/benefit)

The **support statement**, which is referred to as the "reasons why" section; i.e., how the objective statement will be attained, is summarized in a single sentence: Support will be (support/reason why)

Finally, the **brand character statement**, describing the personality of the brand, simply states: Character of the brand will be seen to be (description of brand)

The purpose of this study is to demonstrate that not only can the FCB grid be

utilized by advertising students to write advertising strategy, but that it results in superior advertising strategy, when compared to Bendinger's textbook formula. To demonstrate this, the following two null hypotheses were posed:

H1 When students write advertising strategy, those strategies written according to the FCB quadrant grid will be judged similar to those written according to the textbook method.

H2 When students write advertising strategy, those strategies written according to the FCB sextant grid will be judged similar to those written according to the FCB quadrant grid.

METHOD

To demonstrate the superiority of the FCB grid as a tool for writing advertising strategy, the author analyzed strategies written according to three different methods: textbook formula, the FCB quadrant and the FCB sextant grid. These methods were taught to students enrolled in the author's classes during the spring 1994 semester. As the students of the Advanced Copywriting course had been exposed to both the textbook formula and the FCB quadrant method while enrolled in the Advertising Copywriting and Layout course, it was decided to teach them to write strategy according to the FCB sextant grid. The author had no preference as to which section of the Advertising Copywriting and Layout course would be taught which one of the remaining two methods (textbook formula and FCB quadrant grid) to write strategy. These two methods were assigned at random.

Target population

The target population for this study was undergraduate university students who had selected an advertising option within a journalism major. The subjects were enrolled in the Department of Journalism at a medium-sized midwestern university during the spring semester, 1994. Three accidental samples, which were

intact, were employed. These samples were intact as they consisted of students who were enrolled in two advertising copywriting and layout (Journ 354), and one advanced copywriting course (Journ 455) taught by the author during the spring 1994 semester.

Table 1: Subject characteristics

	Course	Gender M	Gender F	GPA range	Age range	n
Group 1	Journ 354*	6	4	2.02 - 3.88	20 - 24	10
Group 2	Journ 354*	6	4	2.06 - 3.11	20 -24	10
Group 3	Journ 455**	6	4	2.11 - 3.64	20 - 24	10

* Advertising Copywriting & Layout ** Advanced Copywriting

Table 1 contains a breakdown of the classes according to relevant subject characteristics. Each group consisted of ten students (four females and six males) and their ages ranged from 20 to 24 years. The first group consisted of students enrolled in the advertising copywriting and layout course whose GPAs (Grade Point Averages) ranged from 2.02 to 3.88 on a 4.0 scale. Students of the second group were enrolled in another section of the advertising copywriting and layout course and their GPAs ranged from 2.06 to 3.11. Students of the the third group were enrolled in the advanced copywriting course and their GPAs ranged from 2.11 to 3.64. Thus, a total of 30 students, 12 females and 18 males, between 20 and 24 years of age, and whose GPAs ranged from 2.02 to 3.88, served as subjects in the study.

Teaching methods

An equal amount of time (two class periods, each 75 minutes long) was allocated to teaching the three groups how to write advertising strategy. The same teaching methodology was used for all three groups: lectures on the relevant

method for writing strategy were further explained by illustrating on the chalk board, as well as discussing well-known successful strategies (Avis, Pepsi, Michelob, etc.) These methods were taught within the first two weeks of the spring semester, 1994. During the remainder of the semester students received various assignments in order to practice what they were taught.

Method one: textbook formula

The method referred to as the textbook formula is what Bendinger proposed in *The Copy Workshop Workbook* (1988). According to this method, students have to "plug in" words in the formula which consists of three components, objective statement, support statement and a brand character statement (discussed earlier).

Method two: FCB Quadrant grid

The FCB quadrant grid method consisted of teaching students how the FCB grid, which Vaughn introduced in 1979, can be applied to address those areas (Whom are we talking to? What do we want to tell them? How are we going to tell them?) which Moriarty (1991) considers the minimum that should be taken into account when writing strategy. The author found that students became so involved in determining a product's exact location on the FCB quadrant grid, that they lost track of their ultimate goal: to write an effective advertising strategy. Consequently, the author developed a three-step process to aid them in positioning a product in a quadrant. This will be briefly discussed.

Step 1

The first step does not involve determining where a product belongs in a quadrant, but rather selecting the appropriate quadrant in which a product should be positioned (to illustrate how the 3-step process

works, the author will explain how Tombstone frozen pizza should be positioned on the quadrant grid).

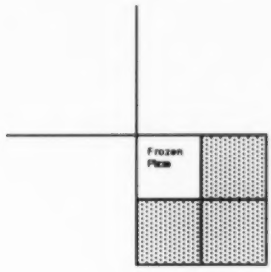
Figure 2: Step 1 for positioning products on the FCB grid

Step 2

This step, or any subsequent steps, will not change the quadrant which was selected during step 1. A product will always remain in the quadrant as selected per step 1. The sole purpose of steps 2 and 3 is to move closer to determining where a product should be positioned within the quadrant which was selected during step 1. In step 2, student strategists have to draw a grid inside the quadrant which was selected during step 1 (quadrant 4). The next move would be, based on the *brand name*, to select a quadrant which would be considered most suitable for the product. As Tombstone is an unusual name for a frozen pizza, it would seem to be more of a high than a low involvement decision and certainly more rational than emotional. It would thus be acceptable to select quadrant 1 (in quadrant 4) as shown in figure 2. As is the case with the first step, there is no actual

positioning of the product during step 2.

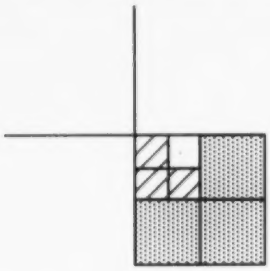
Figure 3: Step 2 for positioning products on the FCB grid



Step 3

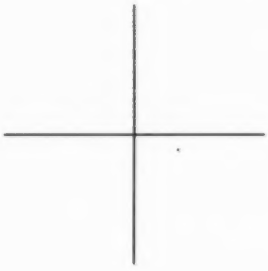
The sole purpose of this step is to determine where the product should be positioned in the quadrant which was selected during step 1. In this step, student strategists have to draw a grid inside the quadrant which was selected during step 2 (quadrant 1). The next move would be to, based on the *features/attributes/characteristics*, select a quadrant which would be considered most suitable for the product (some of these characteristics include: convenience, inexpensive, great taste, availability, hassle-free). Based on these, It would seem feasible to select quadrant 2 (in quadrant 1) and then the product is positioned within the last quadrant selection.

Figure 4: Step 3 for positioning products on the FCB grid



Finally, if so desired, the additional grids which were drawn in quadrant 4 during steps 2 and 3, may be removed to get a clearer picture as to exactly where a Tombstone pizza will fit on the FCB grid. Students now have to go back to the grid (Figure 1) to determine exactly what the positioning of a product in this quadrant implies, and then write the strategy for it.

Figure 5: Step 3 with previously-drawn grids removed

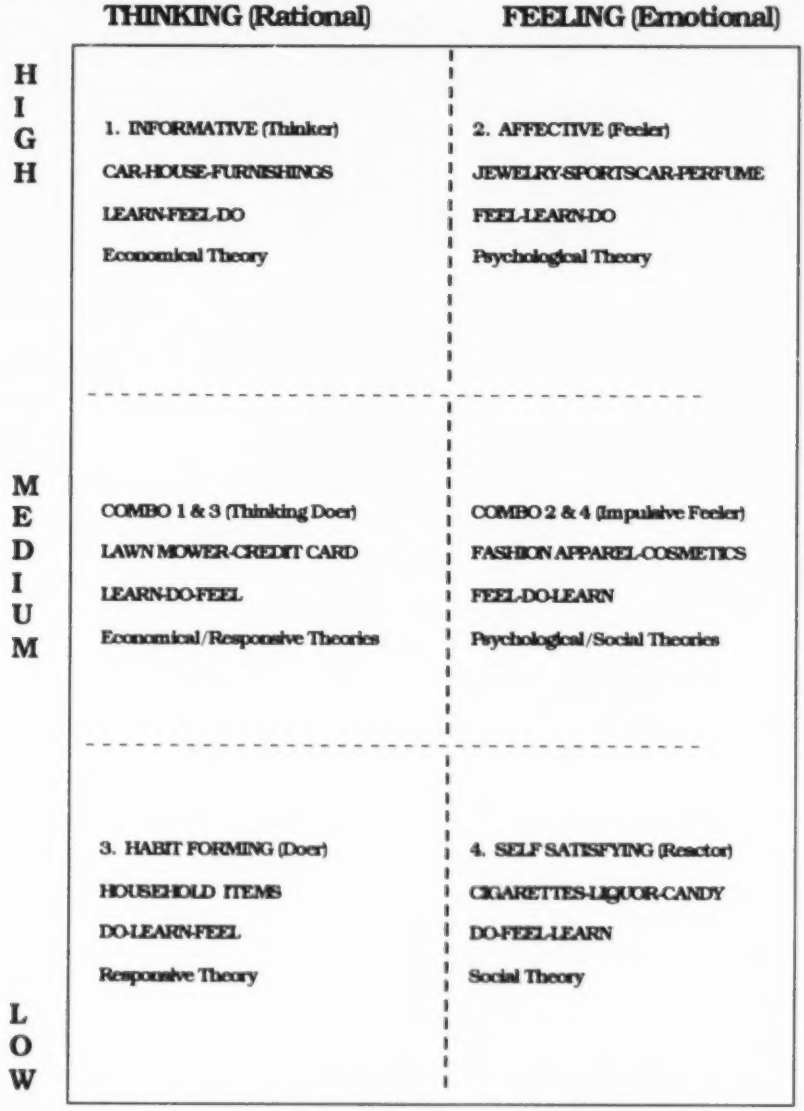


Method three: FCB Sextant grid

The grid, as it is known, distinguishes only between high and low involvement and consists of four quadrants (see Figure 1). When Vaughn introduced the grid, he agreed that some products could belong between quadrants 1 and 3 or between 2 and 4. By acknowledging the two "new" areas,

involvement is now classified in terms of three categories; high, medium and low. It should be noted that the sextant grid does not result in products' moving from a high or low involvement category to the medium involvement category. Products remained where they were originally plotted; rather the appearance of the grid changed: from quadrants to sextants within the same spatial area.

Figure 6: The FCB sextant grid



Unlike the quadrant grid, where the plotting of the product in each quadrant is very important, this is not the case with the sextant grid. What is important is the selection of the sextant in which the product will be plotted. The sextant grid (Figure 6), too, enables students to address those areas that Moriarty (1991) considers to be the minimum when writing strategy.

Experimental task

Mallo Cup, a candy consisting of two chocolate cups, filled with marshmallow and topped with coconut, was selected as the product for which students had to write an advertising strategy as per the method they were taught. This candy was selected because it has not been widely advertised and, therefore, students would not have had an opportunity to base their strategies on, or copy them from, existing advertising.

INSTRUMENT

No standardized scale for measuring the effectiveness of advertising strategy exists. Using the textbook formula as a norm, the author developed such a scale. The textbook formula incorporates five components (objective, target market, brand name, support and brand character). An assumed equal interval, five-point scale (5 = excellent, 4 = good, 3 = average, 2 = weak, 1 = poor) was developed to evaluate four of these components (brand name was eliminated as it was supplied to all groups). To determine scores of these components, they had to be evaluated against the following:

The **objective** had to be specific, measurable, reasonable, and meaningful. The description of the **target market** had to include as many details as possible in terms of demographics, psychographics, lifestyles, etc. The **support** section had

to be preemptive, unique, compelling, believable and meaningful, while the **brand character** had to be a "real" one with personality traits or a theme and executional characteristics that could form an integral part of a campaign and brand identity.

The dependent variable was the actual ranking score of each strategy and the independent variable the teaching method to which each group was exposed.

Two colleagues with numerous years of practical experience (which qualified them to evaluate these strategies) were recruited to evaluate the various strategies in order to avoid personal bias and contamination by the author. The raters were not familiar with which method was used for writing which strategy. Each student strategy was typed and averaged one page in length and had to be evaluated on four components. Components were evaluated by the raters assessing a score (on a 5-point scale which was discussed earlier) to each component and as a total of 30 strategies were involved, 120 evaluations resulted. A section for comments was added if the raters wanted to comment on any of the strategies, regardless of which method was used.

The reliability of this experiment is demonstrated by the differences and similarities between the 120 strategy component scores, contained in Table 2.

Table 2: Differences and similarities between scores on components of strategies

Method	0 - 1 point difference	2 - 3 point difference	4 point difference	Total
Bendinger	38	2	0	40
Quadrant	27	13	0	40
Sextant	27	13	0	40
TOTAL	92	28	0	120

On 92 (76.6%) of the components the raters' scores were within one point or less of each other. The scores of the remaining 28 (23.3%) components were between two and three points of each other. The fact that more than three-quarters of all component scores were either the same, or within one point of each other, lends credibility to the reliability of the experiment.

The two total scores for each strategy (one per rater) were averaged and two-tailed t-tests, alpha level .05, were applied to determine if one specific method was superior to another. The data were analyzed at the computer center of the author's university, using the SPSS-X statistical package. A set of two planned comparisons was conducted. The first focused on the difference between the FCB quadrant grid and textbook approaches. The second focused on the difference between the FCB sextant grid and the FCB quadrant grid approaches. The analysis was patterned after that suggested by Keppel and Zedeck (1989) to provide answers to highly focused questions in a data set.

FINDINGS

The data which were collected are presented in a simple categorical cross-break in Table 3. Half of the strategies written according to the textbook formula (5/10) were scored as *below average* and *weak*. Two each were scored as *average* and *good* while one was scored as *excellent*. All the strategies written according to the FCB quadrant method were scored as either *average* (6/10) or *good* (4/10) while none was considered to be *excellent*. In contrast to this, seven of the strategies written according to the FCB sextant method were scored as either *good* or *excellent* (three falling in the latter category) and the balance (three) was scored as *average*.

Table 3: Categorization of the averaged total scores of strategies

	Weak 0 - 4	Below Average 5 - 8	Average 9 - 12	Good 13 - 16	Excellent 17 - 20	Total
Bendinger	1	4	2	2	1	10
Quadrant	0	0	6	4	0	10
Sextant	0	0	3	4	3	10
TOTAL	1	4	11	10	4	30

From Table 3 the following is noted: The five strategies which were scored as *below average* and *weak* were all written according to the textbook formula. Of the 11 strategies which were scored as *average*, the majority (nine) were written according to the two FCB grid methods. Half of the 14 strategies which were scored from *good* to *excellent*, were written according to the FCB sextant grid method, while the other half were nearly evenly divided between the textbook formula (three) and the FCB quadrant method (four). Of interest should be that 75% of the strategies which were considered to be *excellent*, were written according to the FCB sextant method; none written according to the FCB quadrant method received an *excellent* score. Furthermore, none of the strategies which was written according to one of the FCB grid methods received a score lower than *average*.

In Table 4, descriptive statistics are presented by group. When the means are compared, the strategies written as per the three different methods can be reported as follows: Those written according to the textbook formula and the FCB quadrant would fall in the *average* range with the textbook formula method at the bottom end (9.35) and the FCB quadrant method at the higher end of the range (12.20). The mean of the strategies written according to the FCB sextant method (15.10) would put these in the *good* category. The standard deviations indicate that the strategies for the quadrant method (1.38) are more closely dispersed around the mean than

those of the sextant method (2.48) and the textbook formula (4.55)

Table 4: Descriptive statistics

	Bendinger	Quadrant	Sextant
n	10	10	10
Mean	9.35	12.20	15.10
Standard Deviation	4.55	1.38	2.48
Range	4.0 - 18.0	10.0 - 14.0	11.5 - 18.5

Scores of strategies for the textbook formula ranged from *weak* to *excellent* (4.0 - 18.0), compared to those for the quadrant method which ranged from *average* to *good* (10.0 -14.0) and the sextant method which ranged from *average* to *excellent* (11.5 - 18.5). It would appear that there was no consistency among those strategies written according to the textbook method and this inconsistency is further enforced by the standard deviation (4.55).

Table 5: Summary of significance testing of planned comparisons among groups

Hypothesis	Comparison	Group Means	Difference between means	t-value	DF	p
1	Quadrant	12.20				
	vs					
	Bendinger	9.35	2.85	2.058	27	049
2	Sextant	15.10				
	vs					
	Quadrant	12.20	2.90	2.094	27	045

N = 30; Alpha = .05

The statistical significance of the superiority of the FCB quadrant grid for writing advertising strategy, when compared to the textbook formula, was tested

using a two-tailed t-test at a significance level of .05. To reject the first null hypothesis with 27 degrees of freedom, a t-value larger than 2.052 was required. The t-value of 2.058 for the first null hypothesis exceeded this, and the first null hypothesis is rejected as strategies written according to the FCB quadrant method received higher scores than those written according to the textbook formula. The probability of a t-value of 2.058 occurring by chance is 0.049.

The statistical significance of the superiority of the FCB sextant method for writing advertising strategy, when compared to the FCB quadrant method, was tested using a two-tailed t-test at a significant level of .05. To reject the second null hypothesis with 27 degrees of freedom, a t-value larger than 2.052 was required. The t-value of 2.094 for the second null hypothesis exceeded this and this null hypothesis is rejected as strategies written according to the FCB sextant method received higher scores than those written according to the FCB quadrant method. The probability of a t-value of 2.094 occurring by chance is 0.045.

DISCUSSION

This study demonstrated that the FCB grid is a superior method for writing advertising strategies when compared to those written according to the textbook formula and the results from the experiment which substantiated this, are presented in Table 5. From Table 3 it is clear that strategies written according to the textbook formula came a distant third, as their mean scores just fell within the *average* range.

The author suggests that the poor showing of the strategies written according to the textbook formula could result from the fact that this method consists of a formula where words have to be "plugged into" a framework which then becomes a strategy. An effective and sound strategy requires more than that. In order to write an effective strategy, all variables which could possibly influence such a strategy,

have to be considered. To suggest a formula for writing strategy is too simplistic, as this process is a time-consuming, thought-provoking and involved one. This argument is further supported by the fact that the strategies written according to the textbook formula fared very poorly when evaluated by independent raters who did not know which method was employed for writing the various strategies.

One should note the following differences when comparing the FCB grid to the textbook formula:

- In each of the areas of the FCB grid, it is suggested which type of strategy could reach those consumers in an most effective way (refer to Figures 1 and 6)
- The FCB grid summarizes consumers' involvement and thought processes in their decision-making when purchasing products, and, therefore, it is possible to derive from the FCB grid a full and complete picture of the consumers who have to be targeted.
- The FCB grid also demonstrates whether products are purchased mainly for rational (where logic and functionality prevails) or emotional (where feeling and image are important) reasons, or a combination of both
- The various areas of the FCB grid imply which media could reach the target market in an effective manner.

The FCB grid can serve as a guideline to address those areas which Moriarty (1991) considers to be the minimum for writing strategy. However, the author has found that students tend to limit their answers of the third question ("How are we going to tell them?") to what media should be selected for the executions of their strategies. Consequently, the author proposes that the third area be further broken down into two subsections, viz. Message and Media. This will avoid any confusion

as to what students are supposed to address when answering the "How are we going to tell them?" If so desired, one can add components such as features, benefits, brand character, positioning statement and concept under the Message subsection to further clarify what students should include when dealing with this part. To ease matters for students, the three minimum areas which Moriarty (1991) suggests for writing strategy, together with the two subsections of the third area, can be incorporated into a strategy model. This is beyond the scope of this paper and definitely an area which the author intends to pursue for future research.

LIMITATIONS OF STUDY

The author in no way suggests that this study is flawless. Considering that this was a first attempt to measure the effectiveness of student strategies, the limitations of this study and recommendations on how to counteract these, follow. The author is aware of three possible limitations:

Measurement scale

There is no consensus on what components an effective advertising strategy should include, and it could be argued that the author faulted by including only the components of the textbook formula as no empirical proof exists for the validity of this formula. It may thus be argued that certain components, which are considered to be of great importance, are not contained in the textbook formula.

Non-randomization of subjects to groups

It may also be argued that the subjects employed in the study were not assigned at random to various groups, but were part of accidental samples which were intact, as these groups were the classes which the author taught during the spring 1994 semester.

Subjects' prior knowledge of strategy

The third possible limitation of this study concerns the knowledge of advertising strategy possessed by the students who were enrolled in the advanced copywriting class. Although this was the first time that the subjects of the advanced copywriting class were exposed to the FCB sextant grid, one cannot deny that they had already completed the copywriting and layout class where they were taught both the FCB quadrant grid and textbook formula. Therefore, one cannot rule out the possibility that the superiority of strategies written according to the FCB sextant grid may be attributed to the fact that this group was familiar with strategy.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The author makes two recommendations pertaining to this study. They deal with the development of a valid measurement scale for evaluating the effectiveness of advertising strategy and more testing of the FCB sextant grid and FCB quadrant grid methods for writing strategy.

Measurement scale

The author strongly recommends that an acceptable and valid measurement scale for evaluating the effectiveness of advertising strategy be developed. This should be done in conjunction with the advertising industry. A possible way of accomplishing this could be to survey the top 100 American advertising agencies to determine what they consider to be the minimum components of an effective advertising strategy. Once this has been determined, it should be clearly stated what the requirements for these components are to justify a particular score on such a scale. This is another area which the author intends to pursue.

FCB sextant grid vs FCB quadrant grid

The author's second recommendation concerns more testing of the FCB

sextant and FCB quadrant grid. This could be done, ideally, by assigning subjects at random to two groups before any of these subjects had been taught strategy. Once these groups have been taught to write strategy, the same product assignment should be given to these subjects. The strategies each group writes can then be compared and evaluated on the improved measurement scale (which was previously discussed) to determine if the one method is superior to the other for writing strategies.

CONCLUSION

When Bendinger introduced his strategy formula in his number-one selling textbook, *The Copy Workshop Workbook*, he broke new ground in suggesting how students could write advertising strategy. The purpose of this paper was not to diminish the efforts of Bendinger, but rather to acknowledge his important contribution to advertising education, and to illustrate how other avenues could be explored for the ever-important task of students realizing the importance of writing effective advertising strategy, and how to accomplish this via the FCB grid.

Although Vaughn may never have intended the use of the FCB grid as an educational tool, the author, constantly seeking ways to improve his teaching, has found that the FCB grid can indeed be used by students to write advertising strategy. This is supported by this paper which demonstrated that when students utilize the FCB grid to write strategy, it results in superior strategies when compared to those written according to the textbook formula.

NOTES

[1] Wells, W. D. 1989. *Planning for R.O.I. Effective Advertising Strategy*. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall.

[2] Vaughn, R. 1980. How Advertising Works: A Planning Model ... Putting it All Together. *Journal of Advertising Research*, 20(5):27-33.

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